

April 9, 1984

LB 561

SENATOR KAHLE: Senator Remmers.

SENATOR REMMERS: Mr. Speaker and members of the Legislature, I rise to support this motion. I have not spoken on this issue but I have been a little bit distressed with the misleading statements, the emotionalism that has accompanied this discussion, I think maybe...I think rather might even say false statements. There have been all kind of suggestions that the optometrists are not qualified, that they haven't had the training. We have had suggestions of all the bad things that have happened. Well, I think if we went through the records for the medical doctors, we would also find some things that were not exactly success stories. We have those in all areas. But I think the record of the optometrists is pretty good. I have listened to opposition saying that they lack the education and I think the Journal of Medical Education does not support this. An article of the Journal of Medical Education, Volume 56, February, 1981. The article reports the findings of a study conducted by the Association of University Professors of Ophthalmology. Surveys were taken in '74 and again in '79. The results of the survey showed there was a decline in curriculum, required curriculum in ophthalmology from 18 hours in 1974 to 15 in '79. The hours actually assigned to the Department of Vision was also decreased. While all responding institutions offered medical students electives in ophthalmology, only a minority of the students chose them, only about twenty-five percent. Remember, we have been saying about the training that MD's have in eye care, but according to this report the MD's have not...the average MD has not had this kind of training. I believe the study shows the limited nature of education medical students receive on the eye unless they specialize in ophthalmology. In other words, we have many, our optometrists in the course that they require to take have better training in this area than most MD's. They have the necessary information. They have had the necessary training. Sure their programs have upgraded. There has been suggestions that next year they are going to come back in with eye surgery or whatever it may be. If their training in the future warrants it, why shouldn't they? I think their training at the present time